

Please note that in the course of my work, I sometimes see people with a remarkable propensity to perpetrate violence and abuse. Some of these persons resist being held accountable for their behaviour and may place their partner and/or children at risk of harm. Further, they may seek to disparage and discredit those working on their behalf who only seek to help them address their abusive behaviour. In view of working with people whose behaviour may be abusive, I have developed the following in the interest of client, child and personal safety:

### **Statement on Domestic Violence and Power Imbalances**

Domestic violence is a domination of one person over another. Generally, the partner who is victimized has had no power in the relationship.

Domestic violence is known by various names in professional circles including: conjugal violence; intimate partner violence; partner abuse; woman abuse; and violence against women. Clearly some wording is gender or target specific while other wording is gender neutral and more general with respect to the target.

Domestic violence includes a variety of abusive behaviour whereby some sort of harm is threatened and/or inflicted upon one or more persons by another person who shares a close and emotional relationship and/or shared living arrangement. Domestic violence in the context of these relationships includes behaviour that is often physical and/or verbal and/or psychological in nature.

Domestic violence may however take other forms and is evident in those relationships where one seeks to control any of the behaviour or life of the other through means such as: limiting access to finances; making unilateral financial decisions; limiting friendships; undermining the care of the children; not participating in or demanding household responsibilities; determining one's dress and clothing; limiting or demanding one's work; limiting or restricting recreational activities; demanding sex and unwanted sexual activity; threatening other related persons and/or pets; and limiting access to any shared resources.

Domestic violence is known to create mental health problems for the target of the behaviour. Common mental health problems include depression and anxiety. Further, the relationship between the person engaging in domestic violence and the target is often marked by cycles of abusive behaviour; anger or withdrawal on the part of the target followed by contrite behaviour by the perpetrator resulting in a lowering of defences by the target, until the cycle starts up again.

Domestic violence is not healthy for the target or for the person engaging in the abusive/controlling behaviour. While it is generally understood how such behaviour is contrary to the well being of the target, it harms the person engaging in abusive behaviour too as it is self-defeating in the long term with regard to maintaining healthy and mutually satisfying relationships.

Domestic violence is also harmful to children. Children subject to domestic violence may appear sullen or withdrawn or angry and bitter. These children may have difficulty relating to peers and difficulty focussing at school. Boys may be seen to bully and girls may be seen to be withdrawn. These children are at risk of being diagnosed with PTSD, ADHD, depression and anxiety.

All persons who attend for service of any kind will be screened for domestic violence and power imbalances. This will first be conducted through the initial referral phone call. The purpose of this screening is to provide for people's safety – to be assured that attending for

service, where there is a likelihood of emotional and revealing discussions to be had, won't put anyone at risk of harm for such disclosure.

In the event that issues of domestic violence and/or power imbalances are determined, a safety plan may be devised to facilitate the well being of the persons engaging in the service process although the safety of attendees ultimately rests with the attendees alone.

Given the destructive nature of domestic violence on people and their relationships, where evident, these matters will be addressed in the context of service.

Typically people respond well to an informative and supportive approach to addressing matters concerning domestic violence. Persons who abuse who do well with clinical services tend to be more introspective, have an ability to take responsibility for their behaviour and concern themselves with their impact upon others. However, there are persons who are well entrenched in their behaviour and attitudes. These persons tend to not take responsibility for their behaviour and their contribution to distress. In such circumstances, the target of such behaviour will be advised that the likelihood of a positive outcome is limited and may be counseled with regard to protective strategies.

Where required by law, child protective services will be called in circumstances where a child's well being is placed at risk by virtue of domestic violence. Further police may be called to protect the well being of the intended target of violence even if a client may be charged or convicted of a criminal offence.

At times not only are some persons who engage in domestic violence resistant to change and apt to blame their partner, but may also target the service provider with spurious allegations and other forms of abuse to discredit or bring financial or professional harm in an effort to deflect matters from themselves and/or seek revenge for empowering the independence of the target.

In view of working with people who may seek to make me the target of spurious allegations or abuse, I reserve the right to protect myself by any legal means available including taking action at the expense of the violent/abusive person. Confidentiality will be deemed to be waived by persons engaging in violent or abusive behaviour for the protection of the target, children and/or myself.

Because of my willingness to work with persons who are remarkably abusive, I have been the target of spurious allegations, abuse and even physical intimidation. Notwithstanding, I am still inclined to work with folks in these circumstances, perpetrators and victims, in the interest of their well being, their relationships and their children.

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